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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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6/19/87

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instruction Type all entries	is in How to Comple —complete applica	ete Nationalie Sible sec	onal Register Forms tions			<u></u>
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4. Owr	ner of Pro	pert	ty			<u>.</u>
name Ron	Shipka, Enterpr	ise De	velopment			
street & number	710 West Oakd	ale				
city, town Ch	nicago	•	vicinity of	state	Illinois	60657
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7. Description

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___ deteriorated ___ ruins ___ unexposed Check one
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altered

Check one

X original site
moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- 1. Brew House
- 5. Cellar House
- 2. Machine House
- 6-9. Accessory Buildings
- 3. Boiler House
- 4. Office Block

The Best Brewing Company complex is comprised of nine separate masonry buildings, all rectangular in shape, clustered together. It is located on the southwest corner of Lakewood and Fletcher Streets, in the Lakeview neighborhood of Chicago. The primary buildings face north, with low secondary buildings enclosing an inner courtyard area. The main part of the complex was built in 1893, when a smaller previous brewery building was torn down, with the exception of a small two-story building facing Fletcher Street. The smaller building, probably built about 1885, was used as an office, and earlier as a bottling facility for Kagebein & Folstaff. All the buildings in the complex are of common brick on all facades, with face brick used as a decorative element on the primary north facade.

The architect for Best Brewery was Oscar Beyer of Milwaukee, who carried through the design of the earlier building in type and variation of brick and in stylistic features. The primary buildings are (1) a six-story Brew House with a seven-story tower, (2) a five-story Machine House, and (3) a two-story Boiler House, in addition to (4) the earlier two-story building, which served as offices throughout the life of Best Brewery. The first two floors of the Brew House and Machine House, and the two-story Boiler House, carry through the office structure cornice line, with a belt course and similar fenestration pattern, featuring arched openings on the Boiler House similar to those on the office structure. The crenellated cornice of the office structure was, in fact, carried across to the Brew House, forming an opening from Fletcher Street into the courtyard. While entrances existed into each of the houses on the north facade, Mr. Hasterlik, son of one of the original founding brothers and subsequently president of the Best Brewing Company, recalls that workers entered the plant through that opening and into a side door off the courtyard. The openings on the first two floors are two stories tall, with second story transoms above the windows or doors. On the Brew House and Machine House, these are trabeated, set under the belt course and in sets between face brick pilasters.

These primary buildings present an interesting and varied facade with red face brick embellishments offering decorative contrast to the pale common brick. The lines are further enhanced with a limestone building base and belt courses. Between the face brick pilasters, windows are in sets of two. A few remaining original windows and an historical photograph indicate that the windows were six over six lights. On the lower floors of the Brew and Machine Houses, all windows are trabeated, but the windows at the top floor of each section (fifth, sixth and seventh floors) are triple windows featuring segmental Romanesque arches. At the cornice, a limestone course is supported by corbeling, forming brackets. This pattern of decoration, detailing, and fenestration is carried around the corner of the building two bays on the west side, which face into the courtyard.

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The seven-story tower portion of the Brew House (all breweries from this era featured a tower) was actually a silo for storage of barley. In earlier days, a conveyor carried it from horse drawn wagons into the upper floors, but later, a pneumatic system inhaled the grain directly from railroad cars. In the Brew House, the grain was ground into mash tubs and from there was boiled with the hops and then cooled. The Machine House housed the ice machines, air compressors, and generators, plus a tool room where repairs were made to equipment. The Boiler House contained equipment to heat the plant, plus two 500 horse powered boilers to generate heat for boiling the beer.

On the office building to the west, first and second floors are clearly divided with a wide limestone spandrel between the trabeated openings below and the arched windows above. The arches are articulated with a face brick belt course outlining and connecting them. The Boiler House features narrower spandrels within each opening only, separating the second story arched openings as if they were transoms. On the west end of the office building, a third bay appears to have been added some time after the original building. The limestone spandrel is not continued through this portion, and it does not have windows and other brick details on the second story. It is constructed of the same combination of light common brick with a face brick pilaster.

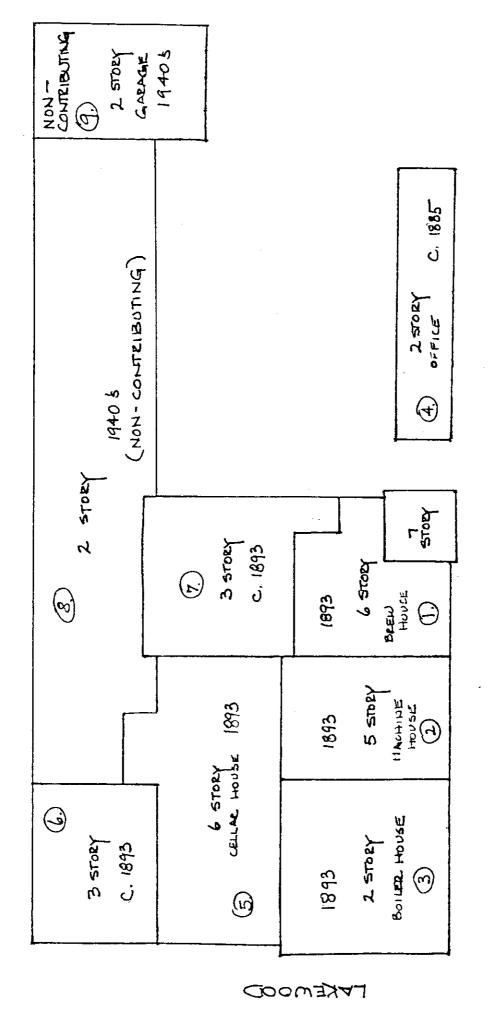
According to Mr. Hasterlik and substantiated by an historical photograph dating from the 1890's, the accessory buildings were built at the same time as or very shortly after the main buildings. The only exception is a two-story section on the southwest, which was built in the 1940's, and a garage building adjacent to that, and probably built about the same time. The accessory buildings are very plain, all of common brick with few plain, double hung windows. They housed various functions over the years. The three-story section to the south of the Brew House was used as the loading area, where grain and other supplies were brought in, and beer was loaded for sale. The large six-story building south of the Machine and Boiler Houses was the cellar house, where beer was fermented and then aged in huge storage tanks. This building has only a few windows on the north elevation, which at one time was graced with a large sign. The east elevation, which is more exposed to the street, had several tiers of windows, some of which were closed in over the years. The lower buildings on the south and west of the property line were also used for storage. Originally, the stables were along the west boundary of the property, further enclosing the courtyard/loading dock area. They have since been demolished.

With the necessity of adapting to Prohibition functions and the changing technology of brewing, some alterations were made to the buildings over the years. On the interior, this has resulted in the removal of equipment so that remaining spaces are large empty rooms used for storage. On the exterior, changes have primarily entailed the closing up of windows and door openings, though the original openings themselves on the primary facade remain clearly delineated, and those on secondary facades are discernible.

The corbelled cornice connecting the office structure to the Brew House over the opening into the courtyard has been removed, as has the similarly designed corbelled cornice which at one time graced the Boiler House. At the southeast corner of the Boiler House, the tall chimney stack once towered above the buildings at 175 feet, but has since been removed due to deterioration. Otherwise, the form, structure, and details of the brewery remain.

This nomination contains seven contributing buildings and two non-contributing buildings.

BEST BREWERY



PLETCHER ST.

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8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400-1499 1500-1599 1600-1699 1700-1799 _XX 1800-1899 _XX 1900-	agriculture _X_ architecture art commerce communications	community planning conservation conservation economics education engineering exploration/settlemen X industry brewing invention	landscape architecture law literature military music t philosophy politics/government	e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
	1885-1893 - architec	ture		
Specific dates	1891-1937 - industry	_	car Beyer, Architect	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SUMMARY

Best Brewery, in its architecture typical of late 19th century Midwestern breweries, represents the historical range of a medium-sized Chicago brewery. The large influx of Germans to the city after 1848 provided brewmasters and a rapidly expanding market for the product. making brewing an important industry to Chicago by the turn of the century. Best Brewery is a significant example of the brewing industry in Chicago from 1891-1937. From its early years selling beer by the barrel to taverns by horse and buggy, struggling through Prohibition by producing related products, and into the more prosperous days of post Prohibition. Best Brewery underwent many changes to adapt to technological, economical, political, and historical events. It was one of six North Side breweries to survive Prohibition, and then to survive the blitz by large breweries forcing the smaller and medium-sized breweries out of business. In 1935, Best Brewery was a pioneer in producing beer under different labels for food store chains, and was one of the first to sell beer in cans-both ideas which enabled the brewery to survive. While many of the changes over time are reflected in the architecture of the brewery, there have been few changes since 1937, and few, if any, of these changes over time have compromised the integrity of the original 1890's architecture. Today, Best Brewery is the only remaining brewery complex on Chicago's North Side.

HISTORY

The Best Brewing Company began in 1891; however, the site had been home to a brewery since 1885. At that time, it was Klockgeter & Company, which only lasted a short time, and then became Kagebein & Folstaff. In 1891, the Hasterlik brothers purchased the brewery and operated it for the next seventy years. The four Hasterlik brothers (Samuel, Charles, Henry, and Ignatz) pulled down the small brewery and built the existing plant in 1893, beginning a great family brewing tradition that was one of few to survive Prohibition. The history of the Best Brewing Company is a history of the German beer business in Chicago, reflecting its many struggles and changes through most of a century.

Germans had continually been one of the largest immigrant groups on Chicago's North Side. Being traditionally a beer drinking and brewing people, many brought their brewing skills and know-how with them to Chicago. In 1850, the population of Chicago was 30,000-with 17% German. By 1870, it had grown to 300,000, with Germans remaining one of the largest immigrant groups. By the late 19th century, the German beer business was entrenched on Chicago's North Side, although it had taken a political struggle to reach this point. In 1854, with whiskey as the drink of Chicago's "Know Nothing" Mayor Levi D. Boone and his colleagues, a campaign was waged against Germans and their beer. Beer halls were ordered to close on Sunday and the liquor license fee was raised 600%. During the following Sundays, police arrested more than 100 Germans in beer halls while ignoring saloons selling whiskey. When the cases came to trial in April, 1855 several hundred Germans battled police near the courthouse in a riot that left one dead and many injured. Consequently, the Mayor backed down, affirming the right of the City's German

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population to make and drink beer. As a result of these events, Germans proceeded to brew beer and lead Chicago to rank as the sixth largest beer producer in the nation by the turn of the century. In the 1882 book The Brewing and Malting Industry of Chicago, the important connection is made between the agriculture and brewing industries. Malting and brewing are the two stages of the process by which grain becomes beer, and at this time, over a million acres of barley were needed to produce the crop for malting in Chicago alone. The combination of agriculture and concentration of German immigrants brought brewing to the Midwest. According to the 1882 book, "Chicago is most favorably located as a great center of beer brewing, by reason of its admirable and unfailing sources of water and malt supply, and on account of its superior advantages with respect to the distribution, in all directions, of the product."

By 1885, Chicago was home to 33 breweries, which employed over 2,000 people. There were many beer gardens and rathskellars open to the public, some run directly by breweries, where German families gathered on Sundays to drink beer, listen to music, and visit with their relatives, friends, and neighbors. By 1890, according to The Saloon Keeper's Journal, 49 gallons of malt liquor were consumed per year for every man, woman, and child in Chicago—more than twice the per capita consumption in Germany.

Through the turn of the century and until Prohibition, Best Brewery contributed its share of beer to Chicago. At that time, beer was distributed in barrels and bottles to local taverns, beer gardens, and other distributors. According to the 1911 Brewery Equipment Directory, Best was a medium-sized brewery for Chicago, producing 80,000 gallons per year. The beer was distributed by Best's team of 20 wagons and 40 horses. They had a successful business which continued to increase under the management of the four Hasterlik brothers.

By 1919, when the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified, 52 breweries existed in Chicago. Most never re-opened after Prohibition, but a few, such as Best Brewery, struggled through those years and went on to experience considerable success through the Depression. When forced to stop brewing by January 16, 1920, Best turned to alternate products and tried a succession of them with varying success over the next thirteen years. Initially, root beer was tried but was scrapped after about six months. Next, "artificial" ice became the main product, with about 110 tons of ice produced each day and sold wholesale. Then, as refrigerators became more popular and the ice business declined, the company began to produce malt syrup. This was a move tried by many breweries because it used much of the same brewing equipment. The malt was sold to bakeries, ice cream manufacturers, and in cans to grocery stores, where it was presumably used in home brew. Best Brewery managed to stay afloat in this manner, though competition was keen, particularly from Anheuser-Busch and Pabst who were also producing malt. Best produced large quantities of malt syrup, selling some of it to other breweries to retail under their own names. For example, they sold to the Schoenhofen Brewery who retailed the malt syrup under the Edelweiss brand.

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				Best	Brewing	Company	οf	Chicago

There was, of course, bootleg beer produced during Prohibition and, of course, it was controlled by such non-Germans as Al Capone. Prohibition led to one of the most violent decades in Chicago and the nation, and some breweries fell into the hands of hoodlums. Hundreds of police and federal officials responsible for enforcing prohibition were paid from illegal beer profits to ignore brewing operations. In Chicago, there were four major gangs—Irish and Italian—that controlled the breweries and beer distribution. Many of the German brewers were law abiding citizens and wanted nothing to do with illegal production or the gangs. Mr. Hasterlik recalls that one day during Prohibition, he was approached by a member of an Italian gang who said they wanted to look at the brewery with the idea of purchasing it. When Mr. Hasterlik, then a very young man, reported this to his parents, he was very nearly kicked out for even reporting it. The Hasterliks were incensed at the very idea of selling the brewery, and wanted nothing to do with the gangs, or illegal production.

On April 7, 1933, beer came back to stay, and eight months later, the 21st Amendment was passed ending Prohibition. Some of the German breweries, including Best Brewery, had survived and immediately began producing beer. By this time, the second generation of Hasterliks, Jerome and his brother, Joseph, were running the brewery. Distribution began as it had ended at Prohibition, with delivery of barrels and some bottles to taverns, distributors and liquor stores. They were producing two different beers at this time, the Hapsburg Beer and the more economical Best Made. The plant also continued its ice and malt syrup business for awhile, but then discontinued as beer business increased.

Approximately 37 breweries opened in Chicago following repeal—18 of these, throughout the city, had remained open during Prohibition, producing other, usually related products. Many did well for a few years or less, but then a change in marketing began forcing many breweries out of business. The large brewers were using advertising to expand their markets, driving smaller brewers out of business. Pabst and Schlitz in Milwaukee and Anheuser-Busch in St. Louis were quickly becoming major factors in the race for tavern and liquor store markets.

The years 1935-1937 were crucial for Best Brewery, changing the direction of the company and helping to revolutionize part of the brewing industry. Not to be undone by elaborate marketing techniques, the Hasterliks came up with a new marketing strategy of their own that saved the company. They became the pioneers of the chain food store beer, developing private label house brands for each of the different chains. It turned out to be their most successful endeavor, with chains such as A&P Tea Co., Hillman's, Kroger, and National Tea Company as their best customers. Some of these carried Best's products locally for over 25 years. In addition to production for the local market, private labels were developed for the Katz Drug Store chain in Missouri and Safeway Foods, as far west as California. By this time, over 250,000 barrels of beer per year were produced by Best Brewery. Some of the early brands were Tudor, produced for A&P; Hillman's Superb for that chain; Embassy Club for Kroger; and the premium Hapsburg for National Tea. In all, there were about 54 different brands being produced, though most were from one recipe.

Also in 1935, American Can Company and the Continental Can Company were developing the more perfect container for beer. Best Brewery was a target for early experimentation with cans, and became one of the first in the area to sell canned beer. They packaged it in both 32 ounce cone top cans and 12 ounce flat top cans. Initially, in the 1930's, a 12 ounce cone top can

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was also produced, but discontinued shortly thereafter. As the production of beer in cans coincided with the new marketing techniques for Best Brewery, the brands such as Tudor, Hillman's, Embassy Club and Hapsburg were sold in cans beginning in 1935.

By 1950, Best Brewery was doing well with the chain store business but struck a deal with Metropolis Brewing Company of New York to brew under the Tudor brand for New York distribution. Metropolis basically took over the company with financial backing and supervisory management, but the Hasterlik brothers continued to operate Best Brewery and produce Best brands of beer. This system continued until 1961, when Metropolis went out of business and the Hasterliks decided to close production at the brewery. The building itself, however, remained in the possession of Mr. Hasterlik until recently.

ARCHITECTURE

An architectural comparison of 19th century breweries in Chicago reveals that the Best Brewery embodies many of the typical features and characteristics of these buildings. The enormous growth of beer production and consumption in the decade 1880-1890 marked the starting point of "modern" brewery architecture in America. Before that time, breweries in Chicago were smaller, often frame structures, with cellars below ground (hence the name), and inferior storage systems for grain, so the characteristic towers were rarely seen. The brewers operating after 1880 not only accommodated themselves to the rapid increase of business, but also foresaw future growth and built for further expansion. Along with the technological evolution of brewing equipment came progress in plant engineering and in the architecture of breweries. When brewery cellars were raised above ground, with new arrangements of equipment, everything was planned on a larger scale, and as brewers were successful, pride of achievement was expressed in the fine craftsmanship and stylistic detailing of the buildings.

The architectural expression of these breweries is the combined result of function, culture, and prevailing architectural styles. The heavy equipment demanded sturdy construction, so iron, steel, and masonry replaced frame. While this was a characteristic evolution for many industrial buildings at the time, the breweries are distinctive as a "collection" of buildings dictated by function, and for the ever present tower which easily lent itself to elaborate, often chateauesque detailing. Attention to cleanliness required smooth but solid floors, bringing in cement and tile. Fresh air and light were often considered to be important, so tall windows were used, and buildings grew in height as gravity took the place of repeated pumping, so the tower brew house loomed high in the air, often decorated with parapets or turrets. The brewery often became more than a workshop, a factory, or an office. It became an ornament to the community and a show place for the visitor. The Germans who immigrated to the North Side of Chicago were known for their excellent masonry skills, and the breweries were good examples of this-most of them, like Best Brewery, displaying many decorative uses of brick achieved with varying colors, bond patterns, arch work, and very creative corbeling. The breweries represented some of the most ambitious efforts of German masons on industrial buildings, combining two of the most admired German skills-brewing and bricklaying. It is particularly interesting to note how they used masonry to render popular stylistic features, such as cornices, arches, and turrets. The effect of this is to produce a restrained version of 1890's exuberance, since these features are commonly rendered more elaborately in terra cotta, limestone, or cast iron. They seemed to particularly delight in

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arches, which are found to some degree in all of the breweries from this period. Hence, many of them have a Richardsonian Romanesque look, one of the late 19th century styles easily adapted to an industrial building.

The Best Brewery illustrates all of these features. The excellent masonry work is manifested in a bold use of light and darker bricks, corbeled cornices, and arched openings. The flat surface of the wall is broken by the use of brick to form pilasters, and by the limestone belt courses. Additional decorative features are achieved with the use of brick to form the crenallated cornice on the low building, and various "turrets." The form of the building is also typical, being a collection of rectangles—the Brew House Tower, Machine House, Boiler House, and so on—that are gathered to form an asymmetrical bundle reflecting the functions, growth and changes of the building complex.

From a review of approximately two dozen extant photographs, the above-mentioned similarities in design of late 19th century breweries is easily discernible. The two breweries most closely resembling Best Brewery were the Peter Hand Brewery at Sheffield and North Avenue, and Brands Brewing Co. on Elston Avenue near Division. They appear to be similar in size and massing as well as architectural detailing, with similar brick work. Other breweries of varying sizes also displayed some of the features, such as Seibens at 1404 North Larrabee Street. A smaller brewery, but yet it displayed talented craftsmanship in its creative corbeling. To the south, the Standard Brewery near Roosevelt Road and Western Avenue fits much the same description as Best, Peter Hand, and Brands. Peter Hand was the only one of these examples to survive Prohibition, and was the last brewery to close in Chicago. It was demolished some years ago. Brands Brewery, Seibens, and Schoenhofen Brewery were all designed by Louis Lehle, a Chicago architect who designed about two-thirds of Chicago's breweries. Peter Hand was designed by Charles Kaestner, and Standard Brewery by Bernard Barthel, two other Chicago architects who designed a number of breweries. Best Brewery seems to be the only example in Chicago of Milwaukee brewery architect Oscar Beyer's work.

During January and February of 1987, a survey was conducted of all brewery sites on Chicago's North Side and selected sites on the South Side. In addition, numerous inquiries were made and further research conducted regarding possible extant breweries.

These studies revealed that with the exception of a few small parts of complexes, only the Schoenhofen Brewery on the South Side has remained, along with Best Brewery on the North Side. Schoenhofen, though one of the larger and most significant Chicago breweries, has, unfortunately, not had the benefit of continued maintenance and is badly deteriorating.

With the exception of a few remnants of the Peter Hand Brewery (the last to close in Chicago), and a small one-story building of the Stenson Brewery, there is nothing left of the other North Side breweries that survived Prohibition—Siebens, Birk, Superior, and Atlanta Breweries, nor of any others.

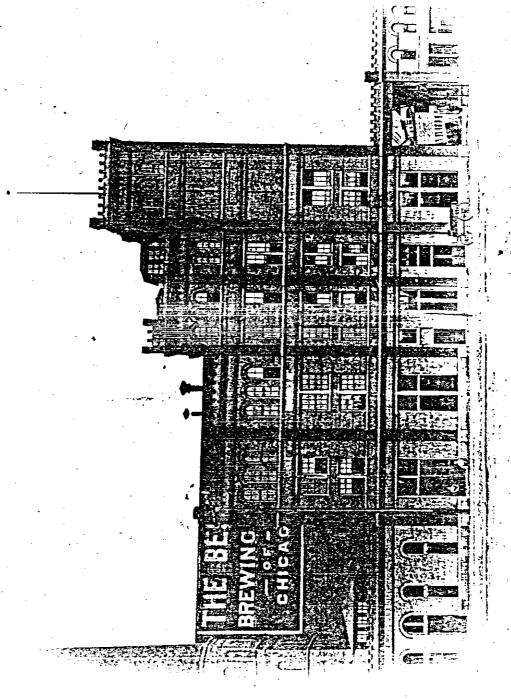
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- 9. Major Bibliographical References (con't)
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 - Kuhlman, Kurt. "Best Brewing Company of Chicago." American Breweriana Journal 22 (May-June, 1986) p.4-8.
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 - United States Brewer's Association. Year Book and Proceedings of the Fifty-First Annual Convention. New York: 1911.
 - Zymatechnic Alumni Association. Chicago Brewery Equipment Directory. Chicago: Zymatechnic Alumni Association, 1911.



THE BEST BREWING CO. Chicago, Ills.

The following properties were also entered in the National Register but were excluded from a previous notice:

CONNECTICUT, Fairfield County, Stamford, Turn-of-River Bridge, Old N. Stamford Rd. at Rippowam River (07/31/87)

CONNECTICUT, New London County, Preston, Preston City Historic District, Amos, Old Shetucket & NW Corner Rds., & CT 164 (07/31/87)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Best Brewing Company of Chicago Building, 1315-1317 W. Fletcher (07/30/87)

ILLINOIS, Warren County, Alexis, Alexis Opera House, 101-105 N. Main St. (07/30/87)

IOWA, Henry County, Mt. Pleasant vicinity, Pleasant Lawn School Historic District, Off IA 218 (03/25/87)

MISSOURI, St. Louis County, Jennings, Seed, Miles A., Carriage House, 2456 Hord Ave., rear (03/25/87)

WASHINGTON, Klickitat County, Glenwood vicinity, Whitcomb Cabin (Proposed Move), 8 mi. S of Glenwood along County Rd. 163 (07/30/87)

The following properties have been removed from the National Register of Historic Places:

FLORIDA, Duval County, Jacksonville, La Villa Boarding Houses, 830, 832, & 836 Houston St. (02/24/81)

MAINE, Kennebec County, Gardiner, Christian Science Church, 17 Lincoln Ave. (08/05/87) MAINE, Oxford County, Lovell, Knight's Country Store, ME 5A (08/05/87)

OHIO, Clinton County, Wilmington, Smith Place School, N. South St. (10/29/85)

OHIO, Cuyahoga County, Cleveland, Newburgh Town Hall, 9213 Miles Rd. (10/29/85)

OHIO, Erie County, Sandusky, Exchange Hotel, 202-204 E. Water St. (10/29/85)

OHIO, Eric County, Sandusky, Ohio Theatre (Sandusky MRA), 205-211 W. Market St. (10/29/85)

OHIO, Fairfield County, Canal Winchester vicinity, Loucks Covered Bridge, Township Rd. 207

(10/29/85)

OHIO, Fairfield County, Pickerington vicinity, Stemen Road Covered Bridge, Violet Township Rd. 226 (10/29/85)

OHIO, Hamilton County, Cincinnati, Salway, William, House (Samuel Hannaford & Sons TR), Gray & Winton Sts. (10/29/85)

OHIO, Lucas County, Toledo, Wheeler Block, 402 Monroe St. (10/29/85)

OHIO, Mahoning County, Youngstown, Idora Park Merry-Go-Round, Idora Park on Canfield Rd. (10/29/85)

OHIO, Muskingum County, Zanesville, Achauer-Linser Brewery and Mansion, 978-988 E. Main St. (10/29/85)

OHIO, Muskingum County, Zanesville, Zanesville YMCA, 34 S. Fifth St. (10/29/85)

OHIO, Richland County, Mansfield, Spreng, Wilfred, J., House (Park Avenue West MRA), 414 Park Ave. W. (10/29/85)

OHIO, Shelby County, New Barn vicinity, Turtle Creek Culvert and Embankment, W of New Barn (10/29/85)

OHIO, Summit County, Peninsula vicinity, Everett Road Covered Bridge, SW of Peninsula (10/29/85)